

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

A method and apparatus for processing free-format data ~~[(301)]~~ to produce a "text object" associated with the free-format data. The text object comprises a plurality of "component nodes" ~~[(302-312)]~~ containing attribute-type identifiers for elements of the free-format text and other data facilitating access to the text object to obtain information and change or add the free-format data. This arrangement obviates the need for the provision of separate database fields for each element of the information. Free-format data can be processed in a similar manner to the way a human being processes free-format data. All elements can be accessed via the constructed text object.